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NSC BRIEFING

20 January 1953

OFFSHORE ISLANDS

I. Situation in offshore islands fairly quiet since fall of Ichiang (18 January).

A. However, ChiCom air and sea reconnaissance in Tachens area has been following pattern similar to that noted just before attack on Ichiang.

B. Thus major Communist attacks on any or all islands in Tachens command possible at any time prior to evacuation of Nationalist forces there.

II. Current plans of US 7th Fleet for evacuation of two principal islands of Tachens group estimate five to seven days required. T.

A. To be evacuated are 10,000 regulars, 2,300 guerrillas, 14,000 civilians, 10,000 tons of supplies and equipment.

B. Chinese Nationalists to be responsible for evacuating Tachan (1,000 guerrillas, 500 civilians) and Pishan (1,500 guerrillas, 1,000 civilians). Y-P

C. Kats apparently do not intend to evacuate Maachishan (35 miles SW main Tachens), where 2,400 regulars, 650 guerrillas, 2,100 civilians.

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III. Communists are capable of large-scale military effort aimed at disrupting Tachens evacuation.

- A. Comms could launch air strikes on Tachens beaches and against US and Nat vessels in area, could make sneak attacks on ships with subs and torpedo boats, could pour artillery fire on Tachens and harbor between.
- B. "We believe it is unlikely that the Communists would deliberately attack US forces engaged in the evacuation of Nationalist garrisons, but the possibility of a serious incident cannot be excluded." (SWIE 100-3-55, 25 Jan)

IV. Communists might move quickly against Matsu Islands--where Mats have only 3,000 regulars, 1,000 guerrillas--while US and Nat forces are occupied in Tachens evacuation.

- A. Believe Comms would prefer to move additional naval and air strength into Matsu area, however, before trying invasion.
- B. In meantime, expect Comms to undertake probing actions aimed at testing US intentions regarding defense of Matsus.
- C. Probing might take form of attacks on Nat shipping, air harassment, shelling by artillery to north.

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V. Communists do not appear prepared at this time to attempt invasion of Quemoy, where Nationalists have more than 50,000 troops.

A. Comm have about 50,000 troops in area opposite Quemoy, would probably want to move two more armies (100,000) into position, would also want strong air and naval support not now available.

B. Communists expected to renew probing actions, to test US intentions, in Quemoy as well as in Matsus.

C. Probing might involve heavy shelling from numerous artillery positions near Quemoy, use of torpedo boats and other craft, or invasion of lightly-held minor islands (Tatan and Erhtan).